DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 348 649 CS 010 995

AUTHOR Livingston, Carol; Taylor, Nancy
TITLE Networking as Community--The Nature of Curriculum: Whole Language.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 51p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; Elementary Education; Information Networks; Literature Reviews; Program Descriptions; *Theory Practice Relationship; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS Educational Issues; School Renewal Network; *Teacher Researcher Cooperation

ABSTRACT

This paper considers the status and potential of researcher-practitioner collaboration toward higher literacy through a restructured curriculum based on the whole language philosophy. Specifically, it examines the status, contribution, and potential of the dialogue in a whole language topical session on the School Renewal Network, an electronic networking community of researchers and practitioners. The paper is organized into four sections corresponding to the following four focus questions: (1) What has happened thus far regarding whole language? (2) How has thinking and practice about reading and language instruction for students changed? What has been the effect on your colleagues and school? (3) What has been the effect on you, your school, and your colleagues in regard to whole language and participation in the network's interactive community? and (4) How can the network help you/your colleagues to improve literacy instruction and experience for students? In this regard, how could the research/practitioner community be strengthened? The first section presents descriptions of the six schools in the whole language group and a discussion of the development and current status of whole language in those schools to date. The second section describes in more detail the individual and institutional changes in each school. The third section describes the content of the papers distributed through the network and the nature of the participant interaction during a 2-day meeting. This section also presents testimony of the network's impact on the whole language group participants, their colleagues, and their schools. The fourth section integrates the major recommendations for research drawn up at the meeting with a brief review of the extant research literature on whole language organized around three major issues: a justification, documentation, and balance. A number of questions are then provided concerning development and change as they pertain to whole language. One table of data is included; 38 references, the focus questions, and six papers from the network are attached. (RS)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Carol C. Livingston
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED348649

Networking as Community

The Nature of Curriculum: Whole Language

Carol Livingston

Nancy Taylor

The Catholic University of America

with:

Connie Anderson, teacher, Aire Libre Elementary, Phoenix, AZ

Maxine Haun, teacher, Ahuimanu Elementary, Kaneohe, HI

Judy Lawrence, teacher, Clinton Elementary, Clinton, OH

Mike Marriam, reading specialist, Seneca Falls Middle School, Seneca Falls, NY

Lisa Rapp, preservice teacher, The Catholic University of America

Clark Reinke, principal, Amanda Arnold Elementary, Manhattan, KS

Bill Towner, media specialist, Kimball Elementary, Seattle, WA

Paper presented as part of the symposium, "None of Us Is as Smart As All of Us": Learning from and Contributing to Practice through an Electronic Researcher-Practitioner Community, at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, April, 1992.

CS010995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

While some "bugs" still need to be worked out, the philosophy of immersion in language, or what we term "Whole Language" must replace the limited traditional basal readers. The book companies have already used the current research to "debasalize" their reading series. Can districts or individuals make the decision to continue with outdated materials and philosophies proven to be unsuccessful?

In my case, it has taken a young man who early in his career learned of a hypocrisy in our schools, a hypocrisy which we have all been asked to accept because numbers were acceptable [i.e., a "predictable" number of students who would not be expected to succeed]. Reflection has allowed that young man and many others like him to see that all children can learn, and that it takes guts to make change, it takes voice, it takes credibility, and it takes a sense of morality to quit accepting what we, as educators, for years have been taught to accept. These new emerging leaders, with a new charge of this morality, have refused to accept our corruption of the numbers game. If we are to regain our preeminence in the global community, more of this new leadership must emerge.

Throughout this narrative, I have spoken of my own personal growth and the emergence of my own leadership capabilities within my school building. The stimulus for this has come from my own questioning of our educational values, obviously, but the part played by the communication through the School Renewal Network cannot be stressed enough. The School Renewal Network allows one to be critical with peers electronically across the country. This same reflection may or may not be available to an individual within the confines of his or her school building or within the school day. This reflection from the Network, then, must come home to the individual's building, district, or even class. Without this reflection, there can be no school reform, there cannot exist our vision of a better American education.

(Mike Marriam, December 1991, working paper)

-- Question 1 --

What Has Happened Thus Far Regarding Whole Language?

> A radical grass-roots movement, rallying under the improbable banner of "whole language, " is quietly fomenting a revolution to change America's classrooms. But unlike so many of the other reform initiatives of the 1980s, whole language. . . begins with the startling premise that the present system of public education doesn't work because it is built on a fundamentally wrong theory of how children learn. (Teacher Magazine, August 1991, p. 21)

The Whole Language Movement

There has been a groundswell of interest in whole language. Even in school systems that still embrace linear skills and basic competency models, trial efforts and individual school-level initiatives are emerging (Brown, 1991). Grassroots support systems have sprung up to support the whole language movement and some have taken on a national status (e.g., TWAL, Whole Language Umbrella, and Teachers Networking: The Whole Language Newsletter). Several publishing companies now devote their efforts almost exclusively to books that reflect the whole language philosophy (e.g. Heinneman, Richard Owens).

This growing interest in whole language can be contextualized in other curricular urges stemming from concern with the need to develop higher order thinking in students. This concern has also been played out in the various subject matter areas (e.g., American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1989; Mathematical Sciences Education Board, 1990; National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, 1989). The major characteristics of these calls for reform focus on:

* activities that develop critical thinking,
* teaching in functional contexts with a stronger emphasis on the application of skill and knowledge, and

* thrusts to integrate across the curriculum so students see the interconnectedness of skill and knowledge.

The literature on whole language in books and journals for teachers reflects this trend. Initially, articles focused on the philosophy and principles of whole language, establishing a system of beliefs about the nature of knowledge, how children and adolescents learn, and what the curriculum should look like. This literature was closely followed by individual accounts of teachers learning to abandon old practices. The literature began to reflect "stories" of teachers' personal growth in learning to listen and transfer control to students, and learning to facilitate student construction of knowledge rather than to dictate the way goals were to be accomplished (e.g., Atwell, 1987; Johnson, 1987). Lately, as more and more people begin practicing a holistic orientation, there are an increasing number of articles that focus on the specifics of classroom practice (e.g., Boyle & Peregoy, 1990; Glazer & Lamme ,1990; Labho & Teal, 1990; Sulzby, 1991).

In addition, some healthy reaction has begun to set in against some practices that are emerging from wide-scale embracement of whole language. This reaction ranges across a number of topics that include:

* the misuse of literature in skill instruction (Larrick, 1991);
* the need for whole language practices to provide more systematic experiences that facilitate children's discovery of the alphabetic principle (Nicholson, 1991);
* the overuse of narrative text at the expense of experience with expository text (Heibert & Fisher, 1990); and
* the need for more direct instruction in some aspects of the reading-writing process (Heibert & Fisher, 1990).

Sometimes there is a tendency to see issues surrounding whole language instruction in simplistic terms, to seek simple answers to complex questions, and to use research evidence to justify ideological position rather than to inform thinking about practice. One goal of the School

Renewal Network is to forge a dialogue between research and practice[1] so that research can provide information and choice to practice and practice can raise questions for research and collaborative exploration.

The purpose of this paper is to consider the status and potential of researcher-practitioner collaboration toward higher literacy through a restructured curriculum built, in part, through the application of the philosophy of whole language. Specifically, it examines the status, contribution, and potential of the dialogue in a WHOLE LANGUAGE topical session on The School Renewal Network, an electronic networking community of researchers and practitioners sponsored by the National Education Association. The trends and ideas described herein have emerged from communication on the network and from conversations with the contributors listed on the title page. In this text, these contributors will be referred to collectively as the "WL Group" (Whole Language Group). All WL Group members and/or their faculty colleagues have been network participants engaged in conversation germane to whole language. Four of the practitioners attended the 2-day meeting in Washington, DC in December 1991, and two contributed to the discussion through in-depth telephone interviews. All had prepared for the meeting by collecting colleague perspectives on the focus questions (Appendix A[2]) and gathering documentation at their respective sites prior to the meeting. In addition to the university-based co-authors, the meeting was attended by a pre-service teacher who, as a work-study student, had monitored a network station and had become a participant in the whole language interchange. The network and the

---

[1]The terms research (or researchers) and practice (or practitioners) are used to reflect certain types of knowledge and perspectives. This is not meant to separate those from higher education and research institutions from those in schools. Indeed, practitioners can be researchers and convey sophisticated understandings of theory.

[2]In this paper, the questions have been reorganized to combine the description of individual and institutional changes into question two, and to consider network influence on these changes in question three.

structure behind the data collection for this paper are described more fully in the lead paper to this symposium.

Whole Language in the WL Group Schools

The extent to which whole language philosophy and practice are institutionalized in the schools of the WL Group varies across the six sites, as it does across the nation, at large. Each site has had a multi-year history of development toward whole language philosophy and practices. This history has included fundamental changes in culture including mode and frequency of teacher talk, ways in which teachers work together, and the manner in which the curriculum is operationalized. Each of the school sites has been involved in national school restructuring projects[3]; consequently, whole language is part of a broader context of change.

At each site the development of whole language began as a grass-roots effort with pioneering teachers who, often through their own initiative, became "trained" and established personal networks of support and inspiration. These teachers shared certain characteristics, among them: a personal style and teaching/learning philosophy conducive to whole language, risk-taking, empowerment, and leadership skills. The extent to which whole language philosophy has taken root in the individual schools (and thus, the proportion of faculty "buy-in") varies across the schools. These differences exert a powerful bearing on the focus of the information presented or sought in Network papers, its sophistication, and the purpose behind the communication. The following WL Group school site descriptions enable the reader to better understand the contexts from which our interchange originated.

Ahuimanu is an ethnically-diverse K-6 elementary school of nearly 600 students located on the windward side of the Island of Oahu, Hawaii. The in-depth assessment and updating of their language arts program and the development of hands-on learning were among the faculty's

---

[3]Five of the six schools participated in the original Mastery In Learning Project (MIL), a five-year research and demonstration school-based improvement effort, and two to its successor, The Mastery In Learning Consortium. (The School Renewal Network was originally designed as a means to support MIL's goal of empowerment through knowledge deliberation.)

improvement priorities during the Mastery In Learning Project. The faculty gathered much information, used consultants, communicated extensively with their mainland colleagues over the network, and engaged in prolonged debate over the advisability of moving to a literature-based basal. A profound sense of responsibility for the systematic development of skills existed side-by-side (often in a single individual) with the belief that reading and writing should be purposeful and built upon good literature. Two years ago they adopted the Houghton Mifflin literature-based series. "Some teachers are trying very hard to use it all the way through, other picking and choosing." The school has purchased classroom sets of literature, and a number of teachers are utilizing them as part of integrated units.

Aire Libre is a 600 student K-6 elementary school in suburban Phoenix, Arizona. The concept for Aire Libre to be a whole language school dates back to the beginning of its participation in the Mastery In Learning Project. Many of Aire Libre's original MIL goals pertained to moving in the direction of whole language; e.g., implementing a literature-based language arts curriculum and providing teachers with human and material resources to facilitate the process. A core of teachers had studied with Goodman and sought the profound curricular and instructional changes implicated by the whole language philosophy. A second group of teachers, schooled in the Spalding method were equally zealous in their advocacy of a systematic phonetic approach to reading and writing. Teachers and parents took sides, and there was great concern over the articulation of students from year to year. The school has incurred "major ups and downs" including having three different principals and changes in the central administration since MIL began. Several years ago, because of overcrowding, the school was divided, and half the students and faculty moved to a new site with the original principal. Many of the original literature committee teachers moved, yet the core ideas of literature-based instruction and process writing have lived on and developed. Teachers at Aire Libre were instrumental in initiating a network session devoted exclusively to whole language. Last year the school chose to adopt a new literature-based basal series (Open Court). The teachers are able to use it at their discretion. Some

whole language teachers have chosen not to use it at all, but most have found it to provide the continuity (both real, in terms of skill development, and psychological, for teachers and parents), in providing a sense of program unity. Furthermore, "Open Court pretty much flows along with the District scope and sequence."

Amanda Arnold, a K-6 elementary school in Manhattan, Kansas, has the broadest and most institutionally-supported whole language program of the WL Group sites. Seven years ago, a school district partnership with Kansas State University created the opportunity for a core group of teachers to develop a knowledge base in whole language philosophy and practice. From their commitment and leadership grew a building wide-effort to focus on literature studies, develop an integrated library program, and emphasize the writing process. As principal, Clark Reinke has facilitated this development by nurturing a culture characterized by trust, risk-taking, opportunities for adults to work with and learn from one another, on-going locally-planned staff development, and a teacher appraisal system that supports self-directed development and professional collegiality where continuous collaborative re-examination of practice is the norm. He has facilitated structural changes including time for planning and revised school schedules. He stated, "My job is to break down barriers for teachers and encourage them . . . ." He is a collaborative participant in the search for new ideas in areas such as assessment and the use of technology in integrated learning. Amanda Arnold established its colleagueship in the Mastery In Learning Consortium in the fall of 1990. Currently, in partnership with Kansas State, the teachers are working under NSF support to design more authentic classroom experiences for teacher trainees.

At Clinton Elementary, a K-4 school in a small rural town in northeast Ohio, the whole language philosophy has developed over the past five years. Language process approaches were a component of their school renewal priorities during their participation in the Mastery In Learning Project. Whole language started at the kindergarten level and grew as teachers "felt comfortable." At present, all teachers are utilizing some components characteristic of whole language instruction with basal usage ranging from extensive at the fourth grade to non-existent at K, Pre-1, and 3rd

grades. They are leading their district in change, and the "superintendent is listening and watching." Much of their energies currently are in the exploration of assessment options including conferencing and interviews, anecdotal records, checklists, learning portfolios, student self-evaluation, and learning logs. Whole language teachers from Clinton were substantive contributors to network descriptions of whole language in practice.

Kimball Elementary, an ethnically-diverse school in Seattle, Washington, also a member of the NEA's Mastery In Learning Consortium, began their school restructuring efforts as a participant in the original Mastery in Learning Project. As part of these efforts, Kimball has been developing a Pacific Rim Curriculum that is thematic, integrated, and cross-graded. Focusing on the students' native cultures, it emphasizes integration of the arts and concern for the environment. The library is the hub of Kimball, both physically, and in practice. As Bill Towner, media specialist explains, "Kimball was involved, at least partially, in whole language instruction before it was *in vogue*." Beginning in 1984 Bill and a number of colleagues collaborated in the planning of a language arts program which combined the inherent strengths of a number of different approaches including language experience, thematic, and story-literature--"essentially the same as whole language." Whole language instruction began in the upper and lower grades and "met in the middle." As Kimball's program has developed, changes in instruction have led the faculty to seek out new ways of assessing and reporting student progress. Reorganization of the school day has provided time for uninterrupted language arts blocks, common team planning time, and ongoing site-initiated staff development. Active parent and community participation and shared governance have involved the faculty in efforts to communicate the whole language philosophy broadly.

Seneca Falls is a 400 student 5-8 middle school located in Seneca Falls, New York. The faculty's participation in whole language began with the confluence of several independent events. One of the most significant was the arrival of English teacher Cindy Myers, who had been a participant in the Breadloaf Project of the early eighties and who modeled for other teachers the reading and writing process in instruction and the need for teachers to be role models in the

learning process. In the mid-eighties the faculty (then, part of the 6-12 Mynderse Academy) joined the Mastery In Learning Project (MIL). Through an MIL subcommittee on "Critical Thinking," Cindy educated her group on the reading and writing process, and a number of faculty began to use it. After the school reconfigured to separate middle and high schools, the new administrator encouraged new approaches to the instruction of middle school youngsters. As a reading teacher, Mike Marriam had been concerned about the large number of identified remedial students. When the state of New York reevaluated its remedial programs and advocated "congruency" (the coordination of Chapter I/PSEN classrooms with that of the regular classroom teachers), he began gradually to work cooperatively with subject area teachers. Whole language has become the prevailing philosophy of the English teachers in grades 6,7, and 8. Learning logs and other content area language arts activities are becoming commonplace in instruction in other content areas. The initiatives have had tangible results: In the school years ending in 1990 and 1991 there were no PSEN-identified (non-handicapped students) exiting the eighth grade. Language arts teachers from the middle school have collaborated with their elementary school colleagues and involved them with other elementary schools over the network. Whole language has become the philosophy in practice for K-4. Only the fifth grade team remains divided, with one teacher in particular, adamant in his preference for a skills-oriented reading program.

-- Question 2 --

How Has Thinking and Practice about Reading and Language Instruction for Students Changed?

What Has Been the Effect on Your Colleagues and School?

Because whole language is a philosophy of how children learn, its effects are enmeshed among other components of the schooling process. As one WL Group member stated, "Whole language is one symptom of a whole different way of teaching. In a true whole language culture,

the entire curriculum is restructured, and instruction in all areas is affected." Change toward whole language instruction implies changes in thought and practice across the curriculum and requires fundamental change in the culture of schools and in the relationship among schools, parents, and community. It appears from the explanations of the WL Group participants that whole language philosophy and practice both leads toward and follows from such changes.

The descriptions in the previous section provide a glimpse into the chronology and context of changed thought and practice across the six schools in the WL Group. In this section, the participants describe those changes in more detail.

Changes in Thinking About Students and Curriculum

> Whole language teachers declare their independence from the constraints of the centralized education system and share with students the power to make decisions about what is learned and how learning takes place. (Koepke, 1991, p. 36)

As whole language philosophy takes root, fundamental changes take place in the ways teachers think about the nature of schooling, about their role, and about students.

Changes in thinking about students and how they learn. Whole language philosophy demands changes from traditional ways of thinking about students and their learning.

> Clark: My mind has become open to the knowledge that all children come to school with language and life experiences. Our responsibility as educators is to build on this language and experiences and open up the world of reading and writing for children. . . . When children are immersed in a literate and language-rich environment in which they hear and experience language and learn how to use language themselves, they become empowered to be self-directed learners. I have learned that children learn skills when they are developmentally ready to learn, and that they learn better in a supportive environment, and that they progress at their own pace.

As Mike remarked, teachers come to reject the tacit assumption that some students will not learn. Maxine noted:

> Some teachers really thought the kids couldn't do it. Teacher expectations have been raised. It makes the teachers feel good. Kids realize it too.

Teachers come to see the need for learning activities and instruction to meet the needs and interests of (indeed, to develop from) students as opposed to fitting students to a predetermined curriculum.

Curriculum and organization. WL Group members described numerous changes in curriculum, instruction, and school organization to enable the development of whole language. Such changes included integration of curriculum across subjects, reading and writing across content areas, thematic units, hands-on activities, individualized language arts instruction, replacement of readers with children's literature, broader repertoire of instructional strategies, and revised schedules to permit longer language arts blocks for process instruction.

Integration of previously distinct curricular subjects and the use of thematic units was a common theme, although the sites varied from "treading in the direction of integrated curriculum" to sophisticated implementation.

> Clark: Curriculum integration has now become standard practice for teachers [at Amanda Arnold], as they seek a more holistic approach and additional connections for children. . . . Literature and writing take place in all curricular areas, even math and science.

Judy noted that the teachers at Clinton are moving from teacher-centered thematic units to the generative theme cycle, which begins with children's questions of the world. Kimball teachers are looking for opportunities to increase interaction between grade levels and are developing school-wide strands such as their Pacific-Rim curriculum.

New ways of thinking about curriculum and instruction has enabled teachers to rethink old grouping practices. Teachers are able to work with homogeneous groups and employ cooperative strategies to maximize individual learning. Maxine noted that the upper grade teachers at Ahuimanu, previously firm in their preference for departmentalized homogeneous grouping, are now having heterogeneous classes.

Budgeting and use of materials. In all WL Group schools, instructional monies have been allocated towards the purchase of children's literature, literature libraries, and tradebook

collections. Teachers have written grants, and reading instruction has become an all-school priority. In some cases, basal text purchases have been eliminated altogether. Again, such changes breed changes in other areas.

> Maxine: As [Ahuimanu teachers] order and use literature libraries (two of each book). . . , it carries over into other areas. Teachers realize they don't need a science book for each child. They see other resources to use. They are more aware.

Changes in assessment practices. Perhaps the greatest impediment to the implementation of whole language is the mismatch between whole language philosophy and assessment practices (both program assessment and student assessment).

> Clark: . . Whole language teachers have realized that traditional assessment and reporting strategies are just not congruent with their beliefs, and they do not provide the appropriate information.

Whole language philosophy has led to the search for alternative strategies for student assessment across the WL Group sites. All six sites have participated in the Network discussion in the ASSESSMENT conference moderated by Joe Walters of Harvard Project Zero. This has been one of the more powerful foci for Network exchange and discussion. Teachers are not only seeking and developing new forms of student assessment but are developing greater sophistication in its educational utilization.

> Bill: Changes in instruction are moving us to develop new ways of assessing and reporting student progress. There is more focus on on-going assessment. Assessment is beginning to guide instruction. . . . We use work to assess more than one skill.

Kimball and Amanda Arnold have been particularly active in this arena, and a teacher from each site attended the work session on Portfolio Assessment (which paralleled the WL Group session). In fact, despite the formidable distance between Manhattan, KS and Seattle, WA, the two teachers are making arrangements for school visitation to better observe and discuss each other's practices in assessment.

Changes in the Ways People Work Together in Schools.

Whole language emphasizes that learning is holistic and connected. These adjectives describe the direction in which the "cultures" in WL Group schools are moving. Teachers see themselves connected with their peers in their schools and across the nation, and they seek time for quality collaboration and shared inquiry.

Changes in ways teachers and specialists work together. In many schools, "regular" teachers and "specialists" operate separately. Specialists--and, in particular, remedial reading teachers and library-media personnel--play integral roles in students' language arts programs. One of the common themes among WL Group schools was that teachers and specialists have begun to work together in substantively different--and more connected--ways. Several participants described ways in which specialists for reading, writing, and chapter I have begun to team teach in classrooms with regular classroom teachers.

> Mike: Our remediation list has so shrunk that my day is spent in actually going into the core curricular classes of the students, helping them gain an authentic understanding and knowledge right there on the spot instead of in an isolated setting. The look of self-esteem on their faces speaks volumes. This also allows me to reach that next echelon of student who need only a little to keep abreast in the classroom.

Bill and Clark spoke of the essential and expanded role of the library-media area and its specialists in a program built around children's literature.

> Bill: The library-media collection is there to support whatever else is going on. . . . One of my major roles is to be a salesperson for top-notched [literature and resources].

Bill described dramatic increases in circulation and has arranged his lunch hour so that students can use the library during their lunch time.

Several of the WL Group participants noted that classroom teachers and specialists such as phys. ed., art, and music are now collaborating to integrate the curriculum. Maxine reported that Ahuimanu's decisions to better integrate support services has brought specialists and whole

language ideas into the regular classrooms and helped teachers to change. For example, Science Lab, which is one hour per week, used to be a separate experience. "Teachers are now discussing with the science teacher and asking, 'where can we go next?'" Teachers are assigning family projects. Parents are interested, and teachers are using parents more in the classroom.

The WL Group acknowledged that there are unresolved dilemmas in the degree to which specialists should disappear into the fabric of integration. There are times when the separate and specialized services are significant for a student's academic or affective needs.

Increase in collegial activity. Each of the WL Group participants described ways in which their respective faculties have developed professional collegiality. Clark reported that, for Amanda Arnold teachers, the rewards of professionalism, have eliminated the need for socialization. The dialogue in faculty rooms and other informal gathering places has changed. Faculty meetings take on a new character. Maxine described how teachers engage in lunchroom discussions, often over Network papers. She stated:

> Before, if we tried to have lunchtime meetings--"This is my lunch time." Then, half the table would be listening. Now, everyone is engaged. . . We see teachers are talking with each other about program, curriculum.

At Kimball and Amanda Arnold, teachers are planning systematic action research to evaluate the outcomes of whole language instruction.

Teachers are seeking and establishing collegial gatherings beyond the confines of their schools. Even though most of the "founding" whole language teachers have moved away, Aire Libre teachers have started meeting with teachers from Deer Valley (a neighboring district) on a voluntary basis. Their meetings, referred to as "Chat and Chew," are an extension of the informal research-sharing and discussion sessions begun during Aire Libre's participation in MIL. Mike and several of his Seneca Falls colleagues "network" with peers in neighboring districts and with members of the Wayne-Finger Lakes English Council. Mike stated, "While whole language has a firm grip in the Seneca Falls District, at present, neighboring districts have little such foundation."

Teachers from several of the schools have coordinated vacation and conference trips to build in time for observation and collaboration with peers at other school sites across the nation.

Recent research on effective schools (e.g., Little, 1982) and school improvement (e.g., Lieberman, 1988) have emphasized the importance of professional collegiality in schools. But increased collaboration and frank professional discussion create new tensions, as well as new possibilities. One of the most obvious tensions is time.

> Maxine: As we talk more, dialoguing time is so important. . . . We need time for dialoguing and peer coaching--It's a real concern.

Another tension is coping with the conflict that arises when professionals openly disagree. It is much easier to hide fundamental philosophical differences in a traditional system where teachers operate in a culture of isolation and top-down decision making; surface agreement about district, school, or even "team" goals is easy to establish and rarely examined. A whole language culture calls for philosophical and practical commitment to certain principles; yet, in many schools, all faculty do not agree. Like the phonics-proponents at Aire Libre and the fifth-grade resistor at Seneca Falls, not all faculty at Ahuimanu "buy into" whole language philosophy, and this creates a dilemma. Maxine explained:

> People ask, "What is wrong with being a traditional teacher? What is wrong if you're really good at it?" Some parents would like to see a school within a school. We don't want to see two camps pitted--more divisive--we want to work toward a common goal where teachers don't feel pitted against one another.

Coping with these conflicts and tensions is part of the change process vital to whole language.

Development of teacher leadership. A whole language culture demands that teachers take leadership for educational decision making within their classroom, and it empowers them to extend that leadership within their school and beyond it.

> Mike: Another . . . realization [was] that the leadership in our buildings had begun to change. Along with Cindy, others, including myself, began to see ourselves as the actual informed educational practitioners of the future. . . . the use of the School Renewal Network allows ALL to take the leadership role.

> Clark: This initiative has empowered and liberated teachers to focus their efforts on the needs of children, and to challenge the barriers that have been in place for a long

> time. This empowerment has caused teachers to become visionary and to see a bigger picture of themselves, their students, and their school.

Teachers become less willing to view expertise as solely external. For example, when recently the teachers at Ahuimanu were asked to collaborate in some work being done at the University of Hawaii, the faculty decided to have their Restructuring Committee "look into it" to be certain that their involvement would fit into Ahuimanu's improvement agenda.

Changes in Student Learning

Ultimately, a philosophy or method of education must be judged by the knowledge, performance, and attitudes of the students who receive instruction according to the philosophy or method. Each of the WL Group members cited specific positive and substantive student outcomes for their whole language efforts to date.

> Judy: As a teacher, I enjoy teaching more. As students, they are excited about learning. As parents, they can't believe how their child is turned on to books and writing.

Judy noted that she is able to use the objectives from the graded course of study as a checklist of pupil progress rather than as a determinant of curriculum in practice. She has found that her pupils have met the objectives more frequently since she has implemented whole language.

Clark noted affective differences in Amanda Arnold students such as increased interest in reading and greater independence. All WL Participants described qualitative changes in the way students interact with language--the reading of good literature, more reading to and by students, more student writing and publishing--and in the students' interest in reading, writing, and learning. All noted progress among those previously thought to have difficulty with reading and language. Mike has documented lower numbers of remedial students leaving the middle school.

> Mike: The irrefutable proof is that we now see EVERY child enrolled in grades 6, 7, and 8 in our building with a book in his or her hands.

Group members agreed that whole language has the same goals as phonics/basal approaches plus important additional goals. They expressed frustration that the research community, to date, has not addressed that fact in their comparisons.

-- Question 3 --

What Has Been the Effect on You, Your School and Your Colleagues in Regard to Whole Language and Participation in the Network's Interactive Community?

It is difficult to understand the effect of any intervention without understanding the fundamental characteristics of the intervention, itself. Thus, we begin this section with a description of the content of the network papers and the nature of participant interaction in the WHOLE LANGUAGE session. Then we present testimony of the network's impact on the WL Group participants, their colleagues, and their schools.

Description of Network Paper Activity and Dialogue to Date

The WHOLE LANGUAGE Session was begun in September 1990 at the request of practitioners who had discovered a common interest through their discussions in the CURRICULUM Sessions. Since that time, over 90 papers have been transmitted from 20 different sites. Appendix B contains a sampling of Network papers.

Over 75 percent of the WHOLE LANGUAGE Session papers have come from 8 sites (6 practitioner sites and 2 researcher/moderator sites). It was from this group of active contributor sites that 5 of the 6 practitioners in the WL Group were selected. The sixth represents a school with region-wide renown for expertise and experience in whole language; although faculty have not been active contributors to the WHOLE LANGUAGE Session, they are actively involved in the network dialogue around alternative assessment for whole language in the ASSESSMENT sessions.

It is likely that the number of workstations monitoring the content of the WHOLE LANGUAGE session is much larger than the 20 represented by the papers. Gauging the range and impact of network communication is problematic. We know from previous research efforts on the network (e.g., Castle, Livingston, Trafton, & Obermeyer, 1990; Livingston, 1991) that a

sizeable number of workstations read and monitor the papers even though they may not contribute, and that much specific follow-up interchange occurs in message format (private station-to-station transmissions). Furthermore, it is difficult to track the impact of network activity on school faculties at the network sites.

Further complicating attempts to document the influence of the network community on practice in whole language is the fact that whole-language-in-practice cuts across other subject matter areas, calls for new instructional strategies, encourages the restructuring of school organizational patterns and curriculum, and makes critical the reassessment of traditional approaches to assessment. Major threads of discussion in the ASSESSMENT sessions include the whole language teachers' dilemma of assessment mismatch and the utilization of portfolio assessment for whole language classrooms. In the CURRICULUM sessions, participants have discussed the integration of curriculum vital to whole language classrooms. In the RESTRUCTURING sessions, participants have sought to learn about ways to find time and opportunities for whole language teachers to collaborative in the design and implementation of integrated instruction and to manage change and conflict productively. Papers in other conferences and sessions have examined related issues in parent involvement, technology, at-risk students, and more. In short, examining dialogue about whole language solely through the WHOLE LANGUAGE session is a bit like the parable about the blind men learning about the elephant. With that caveat, however, the following section summarizes the substantive content of the papers in the WHOLE LANGUAGE session.

Insert Table 1 about here.

As can be seen from Table 1, the first half of network communication in the WHOLE LANGUAGE Session (between September 1990 and mid-February 1991) was dominated by informational papers in which practitioners and, in particular, one researcher-moderator shared

information and resources. Approximately 1/4 of the papers shared classroom strategies and experiences. The set of papers comprising the second half (mid-February 1991 through mid-February 1992) showed a marked increase in focused dialogue and a qualitative difference in the focus of papers sent. An exchange of practical ideas for spelling instruction continued, but papers in which participants shared personal reflections and took a principled stance on an issue pertaining to whole language instruction (e.g., the role of skills or the need for authentic and holistic tasks) increased dramatically. Debate occurred over a number of issues (e.g., direct instruction and phonics for at-risk students and basal v. whole language instruction). This marks an important contribution for this session[4] and for the role of the network in stimulating research/practice dialogue. A number of participants cited recently-reported research about the limitations of whole language instruction and are seeking discussion about its implications.

The WL Group: Effects of Network Participation

Any discussion of Network effects must be qualified. As Maxine was articulate in pointing out, whole language is part of broader changes in thinking and practice, and the Network is but one catalyst in that total process of change. Nonetheless, WL Group participants cited some areas in which the Network has influenced individual and institutional change vis-a-vis whole language. At its most basic, the Network appears to serve two broad and overlapping functions: validation and empowerment. The Network validates and empowers its participants by providing information, connectedness, and support.

Information. PSInet, the networking software of the School Renewal Network, is an acronym for "People Sharing Information Network." The sharing of information--practical and theoretical--is a primary function of the network and one which participants cited as empowering. They have used book lists to order and/or organize books, used thematic ideas for organizing instruction, and arranged school visits based upon information shared. Examples of strategies and

---

[4]Previous analyses of network dialogue have documented that discussion tends to be overly-polite with participants rarely taking overt stands in opposition to those of others.

materials used have generated new ideas in new sites. Research summaries (e.g., reports of declining reading test scores) have generated concern and discussion.

Judy noted that the Network needs to retain a balance of information types. "We need more theory; . . . teachers need to think." Research-based papers and those in which participants share their critical reflection about issues and practices "provide a broader vision of what is going on and what could be . . . . It keeps minds open to change."

The knowledge and ideas in network papers nudge and empower people toward reflection and action. Mike summarized:

> The Network is the "critical friend," the "bug in the side" that does not allow a teacher to become complacent (Somewhere, someone is DOING SOMETHING), and to feel isolated. It has allowed me to gain a little more foothold in the classroom and have a little more effect, not only on PSEN [special needs] students, but on all students in the academic community.

The information on the Network serves as a catalyst for collaboration. Maxine described how network papers engage teachers in lunch time discussion. Sometimes, when teachers became interested in something read over the Network, they asked the specialists to assist them in adopting a given strategy or idea.

The Network serves as a generative information source, empowering practitioners and researchers to co-develop new understandings and procedures and to share their trials, problems, and discoveries.

> Clark: The network has been especially helpful in the area of assessment. . . . [It] offers important dialogue for developing and improving our assessment practices.
>
> Bill: A synergistic product develops--the <u>whole</u> is greater than the sum of the parts.

<u>Connectedness</u>. WL Group members discussed the significance of the Network as a source of connections or "networking." These connections empower participants by providing validation and support for risk-taking and change at the grass roots level. The network provides an outlet for people who want to speak about educational issues but don't yet have a network of like-

minded inquiring individuals in their local situation or who want to try ideas out on the network first.

> Mike: It has become apparent that the greatest enemy of education, not to mention social reform, is isolation. If anything, the School Renewal Network has allowed us to begin to remove this isolation. Encouragement and support from Network researchers have been instrumental in breaking down my own reluctance to share information with others and be willing to take risks in experimenting with new teaching techniques.

One participant felt so strongly about the network's role in preventing personal isolation that it was described as a "personal life support in troubled educational circumstances."

Politics is about the forming of constituencies and finding support and power in people of like persuasions. The School Renewal Network is a powerful political tool. Participants at Mynderse, Clinton, Aire Lire, and Ahuimanu reported sharing network papers with others within and beyond their districts, as Connie stated, "to inspire them to go toward whole language." Judy stated, "The Network has made me aware that I am a small part of the whole change process," and "We like the security of knowing that others are affecting change."

Support. One of the primary effects of the network effort has been the support it provides to participants and their colleagues. Even for those who teach in a firmly-established whole language program, the Network provides a valuable validation and encouragement to share their expertise with others.

> Clark: Our involvement with the network community has helped to affirm and support our efforts and beliefs. We have been able to relate to frustrations and share in success of others. We have felt good about the knowledge we have and that someone can actually benefit from that knowledge.

Gursky (1991) wrote that whole language "is about empowerment . . . . In short; it's about who controls what goes on in the classroom" (p. 27); yet, in reality, most teachers must teach in situations in which substantial control is exercised externally. All teachers must answer to a national reform consciousness which largely takes for granted the traditional theories of learning on which our practices have been based. Nearly all must sustain standardized test comparisons. Many are expected to incorporate district scope and sequence guidelines--almost always sequential

and skills-based. All must answer to concerned parents and some to political and religious conservatives who attack whole language with McCarthy-like tactics. Validation of beliefs and practices is a significant support function for the Network, particularly among faculties who are having to defend whole language against doubters and take risks by openly abandoning traditional practices.

> Connie: The network has been a great contribution to those teachers who may not have received local support for their ides, but they read and receive support that way.

> Judy: Whole language has had a major impact at all different levels [at Clinton]. This interactive community has been a great support since we have resistance outside our building.

A curious but common belief in our culture is that expertise must be external. Another manifestation of Network support is its provision of on-site credibility to the local innovator.

> Mike: Personally, [the Network] has allowed me to achieve the new goals of congruency within my building by giving me a needed credibility in discussing instructional strategies with other faculty members.

As a prospective teacher, Lisa reported that her brief two-month connection with the network has given her "new perspective on the field of education." She suggested that network papers be used as a resource to help undergraduates perceive larger educational issues and help them better understand their coursework as it pertains to whole language.

Limitations. All members of the WL Group expressed frustration at finding the time to participate in the network as fully as they would like. They cited previously documented issues of time, access, comfort, skills (both technology- and communication-related), the small number of active participants, software limitations, and technological glitches[5] as inhibitors to maximizing the potential of the network (Castle, et. al, 1990). Yet all felt strongly about its inherent value and the need to continue.

---

[5]Technology works when it works! At the time of the writing of this paper, the systems at three of the participants' sites are "down" and, at one site, "network" communication has been reduced to hurriedly-scratched notes through the U.S. mails.

-- Question 4 --

How Can the Network Help You/Your Colleagues to Improve Literacy Instruction and Experiences for Students?

In this Regard, How Could the Research/Practitioner Community Be Strengthened?

Over the course of the 2-day work session and in telephone interviews, the WL Group members generated ideas about ways in which research could inform practice and in which on-going dialogue among and between practitioners and researchers could move the aims of whole language forward. To place their suggestions in perspective, we have integrated their major recommendations for research with a brief review of the extant research literature on whole language. We have organized this around three major issues in whole language which emerged from our analysis of the Network papers: justification, documentation, and balance. These issues, of concern both to researchers and practitioners, are obviously interconnected in practice, but are broken down in this paper for the purpose of discussion. After examination of the three issues, we provide a number of questions concerning development and change as it pertains to whole language. The participants hope that these questions will help forge an expanded research agenda that will bring greater clarity to the discussion of whole language issues and assist practitioners in fostering a higher literacy among all students. We conclude the section with the WL Group participants' specific recommendations for the development of research/practice community on the School Renewal Network.

Justification

Early in the December conference session the question of whether we had to justify a whole language approach or whether we could take for granted that it was a worthy approach was broached. Because the meeting participants' preference was clearly the latter position, they decided

to use their time to explore other issues. However, as the Network papers reveal, not all participants on the Network (or their colleagues) are as clear. The Edelsky - McKenna (1991) debate aside, much of the research on whole language indicates that the approach works as well as basal approaches on measures that reflect and are relatively restricted to goals and objectives of basal programs. The exception is at the first grade level, but there is some question as to whether the data collected in the studies are adequate to resolve this issue (McGee & Lomax, 1990, Schickendanz, 1990).

The question of justification looms large in the Network communication in the WHOLE LANGUAGE session. There are two qualitatively different aspects to the question. One type reflects a sharing and seeking of assurance for the efficacy of whole language practices, generally presented by practitioners who are in the process of constructing an understanding of what whole language means. The second type of justification reflects a search for ways to help others see the validity of whole language and child-centered practices; contributors to this type of justification are generally those who have come to own, at a deep personal level, the philosophical principles of whole language. Paper 2 in Appendix B is clearly an example of the second type of justification. Both types reflect concern with the impact of external assessment and policy on their whole language efforts.

Both of these justification types are legitimate; the first type puts responsibility on the part of both researchers and practitioners who have internalized the theory to help them think through their concerns and think more deeply about the reasons embedded in the whole language philosophy. Those who are further committed are also in a position to help inform research in terms of the questions and data sources that should be used in evaluating the effectiveness of whole language and the form in which it is communicated to practitioners, policymakers, and the public.

Assessment and testing is a major issue among participants in the Whole Language session. WL Group members expressed frustration that whole language research has not adequately examined the outcomes of whole language. For example, what many of the evaluations of skill-

oriented versus meaning-oriented programs fail to reflect is the fact that whole language, in its idealized form, embodies many more goals than word recognition and comprehension measured in its traditional form--scores on word recognition and comprehension in standardized test formats. Traditional (Basal) instruction reflects what Resnick (1987) calls low literacy: the inculcation of basic literacy skills to the mass of the population. Whole Language reflects the intent to extend Resnick's notion of "high literacy skill" to the masses. High literacy moves beyond the skill of being able to recognize and decode words and decode the literal meaning of simple written messages to critical use of these basic skills to perform tasks of creative and critical thinking. In traditional programs and program evaluation, basic skills are an end in themselves. Programs with high literacy goals see basic skills as a means to these higher order goals.

QUESTION: What are the intended outcomes of whole language in their full breadth?

Justification and proper evaluation must reflect (and adequately measure) the broad based goals inherent in the whole language philosophy. Justification, assessment, and program evaluations must also reflect different concepts of acquisition in the two approaches. Traditional approaches assume that learning is linear and hierarchically organized. Whole language on the other hand entertains the idea that there may be no tight hierarchy of skills, that learners vary in their "developmental agenda" based on what has already been acquired and personal interest.

QUESTION: What should be the additional indicators by which whole language learning/program success is assessed?

This conception of learning begs longitudinal evaluation and student assessment that reflect individual growth (measurement of progress against a student's own baseline) rather than measurement against a group norm.

QUESTION: How can we systematically gather longitudinal data on the broader aims of whole language instruction?

In order to interpret studies of the successes of whole language and those which compare whole language with traditional approaches, there needs to be greater definitional clarity about what people mean when they use the term "whole language." This leads to the issue of documentation.

Documentation

Practitioners from the Network sites represent a wide range of "whole language" practices, from literature-based textbook reading programs with explicit skill sequences, to interdisciplinary programs using children's trade books in instruction (sometimes with explicit strategy and skill instruction), to highly individualized and child-centered (not curriculum-driven) language experiences--to name but a few variants. Equally apparent in Network papers is the fact that participants vary in their understanding of the translation of whole language philosophy into classroom practice. Resources are sought and shared. Many of the questions posed over the Network ask, "How do you . . .?" Those just finding their way in whole language often ask very global questions or questions reflecting an undifferentiated notion of effective practice. Papers 3 and 4 in appendix B illustrate such requests. Rich documentation of whole language practice is essential to respond to these very sincere and legitimate requests. Paper 5 in appendix B is a response that reflects a deep understanding of whole language and is a sophisticated exemplar of documenting practice.

Whole language has repeatedly been called a philosophy rather than a method. While philosophies may exist in a pure and hypothetical form, the way they are carried out is as varied as the individual who embraces the philosophy. For example, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd (1991) found that teachers could easily be positioned on a definitions-of-reading continuum that moved from word/skill to literature approach. As Vacca & Rasinski (1992) point out, whole language practices are theory driven, but teachers who join the movement come with their own implicit theories. Part of the process of becoming a whole language teacher is one of coming to understand the formal theory behind whole language, confronting one's own intuitive theories and moving toward alignment of the implicit and the formal. The very nature of whole language means

that there will be variability in practice from one classroom to the next. That does not, however, preclude a core of common concepts that can be used to classify classrooms as examples of whole language application.

QUESTION: What is the distinction between whole language instruction and the use of activities with only surface resemblance to whole language?

An important role for the research/practice community is to provide documentation which richly describes the characteristics of whole language in individual classrooms and enables differentiation of whole language and traditional instruction.

Basals provide a script for reading lessons. Whole language, however, is more loosely structured, guided by a set of principles, frameworks and enabling instructional procedures (e.g. mini-lessons, authors chair, buddy reading etc.) that allow for much more variation in practice. While the "curriculum - in - use" will vary from the prescribed curriculum in both cases, the potential for variance is much greater in whole language. We feel the notion of curriculum-in-use is a largely-neglected aspect in literacy evaluation and no better illustrated than in the Stahl and Miller meta-analysis of language experience and whole language approaches (1989). In their response to Stahl and Miller, McGee and Lomax (1990) point out that only two of the studies for which size effects were calculated actually examined the effect of application of whole language theory in the classrooms under study. Documentation in the form of explicit description of whole language-in-practice is essential to move beyond either/or comparisons and ensure meaningful interpretation by practitioners. This is especially critical as the whole language "debate," fueled by calls for education reform, moves into the arena of policy.

One purpose the Network can serve is a means of facilitating deeper thought about the reasons behind practices and therefore facilitating the process of coming to more deeply understand whole language as a philosophy rather than as a set of techniques. Frank Lyman, a colleague of ours from the University of Maryland, helps the preservice and inservice teachers with whom he collaborates to realize that "there is nothing as practical as a good theory," and models "idea to

example" thinking and "example to idea" thinking. (Paper 6 in Appendix B contains an example of the former.) Explicit linkage of concepts from theory and research with documented practical examples is an essential task for the research/practice community.

The testimony of the WL Group members reflects the complex relationship between whole language practice and the change process in their classrooms and schools. Whole language exists within a context, yet few of the studies to date have considered and the ecology of whole language practice. This also must be documented.

> *QUESTION: What are the characteristics of classroom/school culture where whole language teaching is the norm? What is the nature of the roles of teachers, specialists, principals, students, and parents?*
>
> *QUESTION: What is the relationship of whole language to curriculum in-practice in other subject areas?*

Balance

Much of the controversy around whole language centers on this notion of balance and the role played by explicit instruction. This is an issue which characterized much of the Network conversation. It characterized the conversation of both justification types in qualitatively different ways. Participants who are working on their understandings of whole language legitimately recognize the need for students to master skills but are afraid to give up the invariant sequence and isolated focus of basic-skill-oriented practices and replace them with practices more compatible with whole language philosophy, or they haven't resolved the issue of balance. The following excerpt from a Network paper exemplifies their dilemma:

> Are you using any phonics materials . . . ? (I think we've talked about this before, but it still keeps cropping up.) To READ one has to DECODE and to UNDERSTAND. Whole language is an UMBRELLA that motivates and attracts learning styles. Is part of WHOLE language PHONICS?

Those whole language practitioners who have resolved the issue of the role of direct instruction are raising the dialogue to near philosophical level. Again, paper 2 in Appendix B is an exemplar. It links research findings with practical examples and the passion of ethical commitment.

Recently, a series of three articles were published in the Journal of Educational Psychology that are being touted by some, as evidence against whole language. This either-or stance is reminiscent of the paradigm wars (Stanovich, 1990) that have long characterized the reading field and do little to clarify the instructional implications of research on reading. The three articles are accompanied by a thoughtful introduction by Vellutino in which he points out that the findings taken together support the importance of learning the alphabetic principle but are not incompatible with whole language and meaning-centered approaches. Yet, when "results" are translated for dissemination, these interpretations and caveats are too often lost and conclusions reduced to dichotomies of whole language versus phonics. For example, a recent Network paper citing these studies began:

> The January 8th issue of Education Week had an article reporting three studies recently published which cast doubt on benefits of using "only" whole language to teach reading.

Perhaps part of the problem lies in the use of "red herring" language: use of words like "code oriented" and "phonic" approaches, which are associated with specific instructional practices that are at odds with some of the whole language philosophy.

To a large degree the current debate on meaning-centered versus code-centered approaches is focused on the role of code learning, with most of the negative evidence being centered on the first grade year and "at risk" populations. From the philosophical perspective of whole language much of the evidence is narrowly contextualized (looking at a particular time frame in children's literacy growth) and narrowly focused (looking at code acquisition apart from broader definitions of what is involved in deriving meaning from text and what it means to be literate).

Recently Fisher and Heibert (1990) the broadened the argument. In an observational study of contrasting classrooms, they found that literacy tasks in literature-based programs were longer

and more complex than in skill-oriented classes and provided more opportunity for students to engage in behaviors that are important for the development of problem solving and higher order thinking. They also found, however, that the "literature-based" teachers in their study did not provide specific guidance in writing and reading using specific texts. This study raises the question of balance in opportunity to gain access to the way written language works.

The implicit/explicit debate is an important one and it centers on two assumptions at the heart of whole language philosophy: that learning to read is as natural as learning to talk and that spoken and written language are parallel processes. At the opposite end is the assumption that written language is a secondary system mapped on to a primary system (Mattingly and Kavenaugh, 1972) and is therefore less accessible (Downing, 1984) and may, therefore require explicit instruction (Liberman & Liberman, 1990). Can these conflicting positions be reconciled within a whole language perspective? Whole language is about learning and creating environments for learning. (Part of what makes whole language attractive to many educators is that it embraces complexities.) We propose that three factors have bearing on this issue: opportunity, accessibility and individual difference.

Regardless of the epistemological position one takes about the written language system, it is in keeping with whole language philosophy to argue that, given the same opportunity, written language can be learned as naturally as spoken language. The problem is that there are vast differences in the opportunities to learn about written language. All children, unless they are born deaf, have access to a spoken code, although form (Lebov 1970) and function (Delpit, 1988; Heath, 1983) may vary. Access to the written code varies widely in quantity and quality before formal schooling. Network participants have posed questions about the nature and efficacy of whole language with at-risk students and students of differing "achievement" levels.

Strong evidence for whole language is in its effectiveness at the kindergarten level when children are discovering foundational knowledge about the purposes and functions of written language and being exposed to the language of books. Middle class children have access to this

foundational knowledge long before they enter kindergarten. This long apprenticeship is a major factor that sets one type of at-risk child (socio-economically disadvantaged) apart from the mainstream. Evaluations that focus on grade level norms may mask the achievements of these students in whole language classrooms, since what is measured on first grade tests may not be what is being learned or what is developmentally appropriate for these students from disadvantaged life conditions. Since they miss the long apprenticeship enjoyed by more advantaged students, it seems reasonable to assume that they will take longer to acquire literacy-based knowledge.

A second type of "at-risk" student is the child who has more difficulty detecting the regularities or structure that characterizes things to be learned. Nicholson (1989, 1991) has reported that 15% of the New Zealand children do not make much progress in code acquisition at the end of the first year and require "individual reading tutelage in their second year of schooling". These students may need more assistance than others, but the type of assistance does not have to be incompatible with the whole language philosophy. In fact, Reading Recovery is a program that emerged out of whole language to assist children of this second type.

At least two factors seem to be involved in abstracting structure: degree of redundancy and degree to which acquisition can occur independent of explicit instruction. Following Downing (1984), Taylor (1986) has suggested that some aspects of written language may be less accessible and therefore require teachers to provide more explicit feedback and more structured experience. Maxine Haun expressed the practitioner's quandary:

> How to put in instructional skills is the hardest thing--it's real hard. . . . Some people "teach for the moment," but the moment may not arrive! Maybe something needs to be written down. . . . Here is where we could use Network and researcher help.
>
> *QUESTION: How does the whole language teacher diagnose the need for structured experiences and explicit instruction?*
>
> *QUESTION: Which aspects of written language are less accessible and require more structured experience and explicit feedback in instruction?*

QUESTION: How do teachers make explicit to students knowledge/skills about literacy in ways compatible with the whole language philosophy?

QUESTION: Whole language offers opportunities for students with difficulties to engage in more meaningful types of activities as well as high level learners. How does whole language instruction meet different learning needs? What does a teacher have to know/do?

An entirely different way of viewing the issue of balance is in the realm of school ethos and concerns the practical reality of attempting to reconcile or cope with radically different philosophical and/or pedagogical persuasions among faculty. This is a common situation in many schools, where teacher isolation and individualism has been the norm. This issue of balance poses very real dilemmas; for example:

QUESTION: In schools where whole language teachers co-exist with teachers who teach a skills-based basal-driven curriculum, what is the effect on students moving between the different approaches from year to year?

Creating the Conditions for Whole Language

Many of the questions generated by the WL Group concerned the facilitation of change and development--teacher preparation and ongoing support, administrative climate and policy, and building understanding of whole language among parents and community. (The balance question listed above is relevant to school change.) These questions urge a collaboration among researchers in the areas of learning and literacy with those who study school change and professional development.

QUESTION: "Outstanding" teachers of whole language have a deep sense of process. How do you develop that? Diagnose it?

QUESTION: Whole language curriculum is integrated; much instruction is not "frontal." It is difficult for the novice observer to "dissect" it into discrete elements and subjects. Some whole language teachers are reluctant to take on interns and student teachers because

of the complexity of their classrooms. What types of preservice teacher education experiences would best prepare new teachers for whole language instruction?

QUESTION: What types of inservice/mentoring experiences are needed to acculturate new teachers into an already functioning whole language school?

QUESTION: Grass roots change was a characteristic of each of the sites in WL Group. Can whole language instruction be "mandated" or even "encouraged" by central planning? Must it evolve from the grass roots?

QUESTION: Is a whole language "culture" best achieved through a "bottom-up" change process or through a combination of "top-down" and "bottom-up" change? In either case, what type of administrative support is needed to nurture the development of whole language?

QUESTION: What are effective ways to involve parents and community and build an understanding of whole language instruction?

QUESTION: How do the issues of controversy and censorship around children's literature affect whole language instruction? How can whole language educators address the beliefs and perceptions of the conservative right-wing and religious fundamentalist opposition?

Strengthening the Research/Practice Community on the Network

In the preceding section, we outlined recommendations for strengthening the larger research/practice community through more focused investigation of whole language issues. In addition to those suggestions, the WL Group made some specific recommendations for the Network community.

WL Group members agreed that the Network should maintain a balance of theory, practical application, and information--that blend, indeed, was the School Renewal Network's raison d'etre. The members believed that exploration of issues (such as assessment) that are extending the bounds of current practice are ideal for Network dialogue.

As whole language and its look-alikes have become more popular, resources and "experts" have proliferated. WL Group members called for more sophisticated evaluations of these resources in Network papers. In particular, they suggested a critically-annotated data base of conferences and speakers in which practitioners could share candid evaluations of the focus and impact of these resources as compared to their needs.

The Network could serve a critical function in improving practice, sharing insights, and counteracting faddism by supporting action research around whole language issues--helping to define areas of focus, critical variables, criteria, and so on. The Network might also serve to facilitate production and sharing of affordable documentation including videotapes for teachers and parents, especially of whole language practices at upper elementary, middle school, and secondary levels.

Network participants who have more sophisticated information and discussion needs sometimes feel frustration at the level of dialogue. Time is precious. One WL Group member reported that their participation declined when "we gave more than we got." At a recent Center symposium, Network representatives discussed ways to reduce paper clutter on the Network and enhance the substantive content. They designed configurations for special interest groups to dialogue through messages or temporary sessions and, when finished, to report back through papers in the regular conferences and sessions. The WL group endorsed this suggestion as a means to better tailor Network communication to the needs of specific sites and increase the sophistication of the dialogue. The use of such "synergy" groups with students is another area for exploration. The problem solving or topical focus of the groups would move student use of the Network beyond the "penpal" stage and engage them in creative and critical thinking and purposeful writing with their peers across the nation.

Because new Network sites are being added continuously as the NEA Center for Innovation expands the participants in its programs of restructuring, not all session participants are experienced with whole language or with using the Network system. The unavoidable "Network

learning curve" places some limits on the sophistication of papers, particularly requests for help, so it is essential that Network moderators (both "official" and informal) help new users find access to previously-transmitted papers which may address their concerns.

Finally, to increase the impact of the Network on practice across the nation, participants (researchers and practitioners) need to find and share ways to increase participation in the dialogue within each site.

Conclusion

As whole language becomes more prominent in educational discussions, it is essential that information be available to guide decisions and practice--information from scholarly research, insights from action research, descriptions of exemplary practice, and analyses of books and materials--and that the information, questions, and issues be collaboratively and critically reflected upon. The School Renewal Network is one means for that exchange.

Increasing research/practice dialogue, over the Network and in other venues, is critical to improved schools. As many others have noted, the task is not a simple one. Part of the dilemma is that, in responding to questions that are complex (and that is what the good ones are), one has to transform theoretical understanding into propositions that can be easily understood by those who don't have the same theoretical background. That is a very difficult and time consuming task. As one of us noted, "Frequently when Lisa would wave a Network question at me and ask me to respond, the magnitude of the task was overwhelming and I just didn't have the time or energy to respond." This is not only true for the researcher responding to the practitioner, but to the experienced practitioner attempting to codify practical knowledge--i.e., convey the embedded theory of expert practice. The difficulty of the task is compounded by the ambiguities of responding to a decontextualized question.

Time is an issue, in part, because this type of activity is not a sanctioned component of either the researcher's or the practitioner's job--though it ought to be. For researchers, the careful thought and abstracting of relevant literature in order to respond to problems of practice can be every bit as time consuming and intense as writing for a scholarly journal; its impact on others may be even greater. Yet, such writing is not acknowledged. Current research on school change and improvement is clear on the importance of a "learning culture" among adults as well as children in schools (e.g., Joyce, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Miller, in press), yet Network participation is an "extra" task for practitioners also. Despite these difficulties, the Network has demonstrated the positive impact of the interactive community. There is a clear and natural relationship between the Network and whole language. The task, then, is to work to reduce the barriers.

> Whole language has brought about positive collaborative efforts among staff members who have typically worked in isolation. As they discovered children learned better collaboratively, they sought out the collegiality which supported their efforts, as well. And now with the Network, they see themselves as part of something even larger and more powerful; and they see themselves as key participants of this Network. . . . By participating in the Network we are experiencing and modeling whole language learning ourselves. By reading, writing, reflecting, and sharing through the Network we become part of a learning community which supports, affirms, and values us as learners. (Clarke Reinke, December 1991)

References

American Association for the Advancement of Science. (1989). Science for all Americans. Washington, D.C.: The Association.

Atwell, N. (1987). In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents. Upper Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.

Boyle, O. & Peregoy, S. (1990). Literacy scaffolds: Strategies for first- and second-language readers. The Reading Teacher, 44(3), 194-201.

Brown, R. (1991). Schools of thought: How the politics of literacy shape thinking in the classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Castle, S., Livingston, C., Trafton, R., & Obermeyer, G. (1990, April). Linking research and practice for site-based school renewal. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA.

Delpit, L. D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. Harvard Educational Review, 58, 280-298.

Downing, J. & Valtin, R. (Eds). (1984). Language awareness and learning to read. New York: Spinger-Verlag.

Edelsky, C. (1990). Whose agenda is this anyway? A response to McKenna, Robinson, and Miller. Educational Researcher, 19(8), 7-11.

Fisher, C. & Hiebert, E. (1990). Characteristics of tasks in two approaches to literacy instruction. The Elementary School Journal, 91(1), 3-12.

Fullan, M. with Stiegelbauer, S. (1991). The new meaning of educational change. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gursky, D. (1991). After the reign of Dick and Jane. Teacher Magazine, 2(9), 22-29

Heath, S.B. (1983). Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heibert, E. & Fisher, C. (1990). Whole language: Three themes for the future. Educational Leadership, 47(6), 62-64.

Johnson, K. (1987). Doing words. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Joyce, B. (Ed.). (1990). Changing school culture through staff development. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Koepke, M. (1991). The power to be a professional. Teacher Magazine, 2(9), 35-41.

Labho,L. & Teal, W. (1990). Cross-age reading: A strategy for helping poor readers. The Reading Teacher, 43(6), 362-369.

Labov, W. (1970). The logic of nonstandard English. In F. Williams (Ed.), Language and poverty: Perspectives on a theme. Chicago: Markman Publishing Co.

Larrick, N. (1991). Give us books...but also...give us wings. The New Advocate, 4(2), 77-83.

Liberman, I.Y. & Liberman, A.M. (1990). Whole language vs. code emphasis: Underlying assumptions and their implications for reading instruction. Annals of Dyslexia, 40, 51 -76.

Lieberman, A. (Ed.). (1988). Building a professional culture in schools. New York: Teachers College Press.

Little, J. W. Norms of collegiality and experimentation: Workplace conditions of school success. American Educational Research Journal, 19, 325-340.

Livingston, C. (1991, April). Examining the evidence: Reflection and notation in network conversation. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Mathematical Sciences Education Board (1990). Reshaping school mathematics: A philosophy and framework for curriculum. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Mattingly, I.G. (1972). Reading, the linguistic process, and linguistic process and linguistic awareness. In J.F. Kavanaugh & I.G. Mattingly (Eds.), Language by ear and by eye: The relationships between speech and reading, (pp. 133-148). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

McGee, L.M. & Lomax, R.G. (1990). On combining apples and oranges: A response to Stahl and Miller. Review of Educational Research. 60, 133-140.

McKenna M., Robinson, R., and Miller, J. (1990). Whole language: A research agenda for the nineties. Educational Researcher, 19(8), 3-6.

Miller, L. (in press). Teacher leadership in a renewing school. In C. Livingston (Ed.), teachers as leaders: Evolving roles. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools (1989). Charting a course: Social studies for the 21st Century. Washington, D.C: The Commission.

Nicholson, T. (1989). A comment on Reading Recovery. New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 24, 95-97.

Nicholson, T. (1991). Do children read words better in context or in lists? A classic study revisited. Journal of Educational Research, 83, 444-450.

Resnick, D.P. & Resnick L.B. (1977). The nature of literacy: an historical exploration. Harvard Educational Review, 47, 370-385.

Richardson, V., Anders, P., Tidwell, D., & Lloyd, C. (1991). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. American Educational Research Journal, 28, 559-586.

Stahl, S.A. & Miller, P.D. (1989). Whole language and language experience approaches for beginning reading: A quantitative research synthesis. Review of Educational Research, 59, 87-116.

Stanovich, K.E. (1990). A call for an end to the paradigm wars in reading research. Journal of Reading Behavior, 22, 221-231.

Sulzby, E. (1991). Assessment of emergent literacy: Storybook reading. The Reading Teacher, 44, 498-501.

Taylor, N. (1986). Developing beginning literacy concepts: Content and Context. In D. Yaden & S. Templeton (Eds.), Metalinguistic awareness and beginning literacy: Conceptualizing what it means to learn to read and write. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

Vacca, R.T. & Rasinski, T.V. (1992). Case studies in whole language. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich.

Table 1

Content Analysis of Network Papers in WHOLE LANGUAGE Session through 2/12/92

	First Half (47 papers)		Second Half (46 papers)	
Category	n	%	n	%
Requests and questions	6	13	10	22
Information about resources	30	64	17	37
Description of practices; idea sharing	11	23	16	35
Reflections; defending stances	5	11	17	37
Other (including process facilitation)	5	11	1	2

Note. Total n = 93 papers. Column totals may exceed 93 because some papers have multiple categorizations.

APPENDIX A

WHOLE LANGUAGE AND NETWORKING

ISSUES:

WHOLE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION
NETWORK AS "COMMUNITY"
RESEARCH/PRACTICE INTERACTION RE WHOLE LANGUAGE

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

1. What has happened thus far in regard to whole language instruction in your school and how has the network community contributed?

2. How has your thinking and practice (and that of your colleagues) changed regarding reading and language instruction for students? How has your participation in the network's community affected your thinking and practice?

3. What has been the effect on your school (or institution) and your colleagues in regard to whole language and participation in this interactive community?

4. How can the network help you/your colleagues to improve literacy instruction and experiences for students? In this regard, how could the research/practitioner community be strengthened?

APPENDIX B--PAPER 1

```
##########################################################################################
Paper from server MILPNET, conference INSTR-STRAT, session WHOLE-LANG:
10/12/90 DFLEMING    @MILPNET     "Vermont's Writing Portfolio"
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Vermont teachers are readying themselves for piloting the much-talked about Vermont portfolio in writing. Teachers will begin collecting samples of student work next month. The collections will include finished papers as well as drafts, and are expected to show how students approached problems and tried solutions.

The writing portfolio is expected to contain a poem, play, or "personal narration." It will also include a personal response to a cultural or sports event, a book, a mathematical problem, or a current issue. In addition, it will contain prose pieces from classes other than English or Language Arts.

The materials in each student portfolio will be evaluated on at least seven criteria. These include:

- how the organization of the work suits the writer's purposes

- the writing exhibits personal expression

- how use of detail adds to clarity

- evidence of progress over time

- opportunity to revise work

- self-analysis by the student, including selection of his/her "best piece."

This list represents work in progress and not a final consensus on the assessment criteria. The Vermont portfolio (a state-wide model) may also include non-written samples, including videotapes or audiotapes.

For more information about the progress of the Vermont Portfolio in Writing and Mathematics as a tool for pupil assessment, contact:

Ross Brewer
Director of Planning and Policy Development
Vermont Department of Education
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

```
##########################################################################################
```

APPENDIX B--PAPER 2

##
Paper from server MILPNET, conference INSTR-STRAT, session WHOLE-LANG:
02/06/91 MYNDERSE @MILPNET "R) Research on Whole Language and At-Risk S

To: Westwood and all concerned
From: Mike Marriam, Mynderse

I read with great interest your paper of Jan. 24 on research of "whole language" and at risk students and welcome a chance to comment on it. As a teacher of "remedial" reading for 14 years in grades 5-8, I have seen and have used many approaches in an attempt to reach and teach this particular type of student. Though I don't doubt the research quoted by Stahl and Miller, I would like to take this opportunity to deal with this from a practitioner's point of view.

I full-heartedly support the many positive comments you make regarding WL and allow the reader to draw his own conclusions, remembering particularly that instruction of at-risk students often involves a lack of motivation that basals don't particularly address. The emphasis on using good literature in the classroom and putting pressure on the basal publishers to use actual text (because if WL hadn't brought that to bear, then basals would continue to be the "same lifeless, abridged, edited material" that they have always been) is important. After all, basal manufacturers are in business to make a profit. The reminder that the ultimate goal of reading instruction is to enable students to read with understanding; the doing-away with worksheets, and the active encouragement of the classroom teacher to take the initiative are also the keys to which we adhere (to paraphrase your remarks and add emphasis to them. After all, what is the purpose of teaching reading?)

To address the other argument about phonics, I concur with your conclusions about the need to incorporate phonics into the program (I hope that proponents and opponents of WL don't think that there is no room for direct instruction. If one is to actually think that (which some teachers in my own district were led to believe in their initial contacts with WL) then someone isn't doing their job.) Research indicates that students, particularly disadvantaged students (who don't have the opportunity to learn and demonstrate what they have learned at home, to paraphrase your paper again) need sound symbol, grapho-phonemic relationships in beginning reading (supports Chall along with Karen D'Angelo Bromley and many others). The trick now becomes how to teach. In some of the meetings with the teachers in my district mentioned above, the need of introductory mini-lessons using big books needed to be emphasized. While students are reading, the necessity of individualized instruction comes into play. Recorded read-along stories are used also to support the sound symbol relating within context. Even Rudolf Flesch, the "godfather of phonics" in WHY JOHNNY STILL CAN'T READ (Harper and Row, 1981) says to teach the intensive phonics and then get into good literature.

To be even more specific, this question was addressed in New Zealand, where the idea of WL began. Marie Clay developed the Reading Recovery Program with first graders who were lagging behind their peers. The state of Ohio has adopted this program with some success (help us out here, Ohioans!) The Success for All program developed in several Baltimore area schools utilizes the services of tutors and regrouping of children in grades 1-3 into groups of 15 students at the same reading levels with 90 minute sessions of direct instruction per day. Early reading activities include auditory discrimination, sound recognition, and blending using phonetic minibooks instead of basals. For more information on this program, contact John at CREMS.

The assessment question still rears its ugly head. Perhaps we need to have second thoughts about the vehicles we use to evaluate our children and ask if these are testing the right things that we find important (I realize that this topic is not new to this network). Perhaps standardized tests themselves need to be reassessed (Again, companies want to make a profit). In New York State, portfolio assessment will be encouraged within each district. These could include lists of books read by the student and/or tapes of the child reading orally. Our particular district is looking at the Degrees of Reading Power (in the ASSESSMENT conference) to get a better picture of reading ability.

In conclusion, WL is a philosophy that centers on process. There is and should be room for phonics within the structure of direct instruction, and this direct instructiion should constitue the first part of the reading class time (according to Nancie Atwell's model) and can't be neglected. After the lesson, get the kids into their books. Those disadvantaged students will choose those that they can handle (or those in which you select that will support your lesson.) Then individualize a lesson with them finding new words in context or examples of short and long vowels.

I hope in this paper I have attempted to add to our knowledge of whole language, specifically the reading process. It really can be whatever you want for your classroom. It is not merely letting students read with no comprehension or decoding strategies. We each need to become involved with the process of actively teaching our students how to read. If the conclusive research indicates that there is no advantage of basal reading over whole language, but with whole language comes an intrinsic motivation to read within every child, then I conclude that there IS a difference. The best way for any student to become a better reader is to READ.

M. Marriam

##########

APPENDIX B--PAPER 3

```
##########################################################################################
Paper from server MILPNET, conference INSTR-STRAT, session WHOLE-LANG:
12/14/90 MARSHLLBJB  @MILPNET     "Suggestions for spelling work within W.L.??
------------------------------------------------------------------------------

   We have a seminar group of ten teachers who are meeting to
   discuss trends/issues involving whole language. One recent concern
   was toward spelling: what have schools tried? Demons? Kids' own
   writing? Traditional lists? Prefix/suffix bases...? Any thoughts?
   Please direct this reply to Sharon Owen/Hoglan Elem/Marshalltown.

##########################################################################################
```

APPENDIX B--PAPER 4

```
!!!
```

APPENDIX B--PAPER 5

```
################################################################################
Paper from server MILPNET, conference INSTR-STRAT, session WHOLE-LANG:
12/04/90 CLINTON     @MILPNET     "R)Help for First Grade Teacher"
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------
To:  Anne at Aire Libre
From:  Linda at Clinton
Re:  "help for first grade teacher"
     10/15/90  conference:  INSTR-STRAT, session:  WHOLE-LANG

This message comes to you very late and I'm sorry for the delay but finding
time to put this on the network is almost impossible... anyway here it is
and I hope some of it proves helpful!  I use whole language with my
pre-first graders here at Clinton.  I have found it to be very rewarding
over the past three years.  You had lots of questions and I'll try to
answer them through this daily time schedule that I use.  First a copy and
then some comments.

                    Daily Schedule

9:05 - 9:30              Opening Grouptime

                         - Calendar/Weather
                         - Today's Schedule
                         - Daily Message
                         - Modeled Writing
                         - Songs/Poems

9:30 - 10:00             Writing

                         - Folders
                         - Free writing
                         - Sharing

10:00 - 10:30            Shared Book Experience

                         - Read Aloud 1-2 Books
                         - Big Books
                         - Chart Poems
                         - Songs/Nursery Rhymes
                         - Sharing

10:30 - 11:15            Reading Groups/Independent Work Time

                         - Groups
                         - Centers
                         - Publishing
                         - Output


In opening grouptime I really stress listening and oral language skills as
we discuss calendar/weather, today's schedule and do the songs and poems.
Each morning I write a short message on the board which the children try to
read alone first and then together as a group.  Modeled writing is where we
```

write a variety of things on large chart paper(names, words, sentences, stories, lists, LEA stories, etc.). I model out loud to my students what I am thinking about as I write. I model capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. This shows them what they are to be thinking about and doing as they begin to write alone.

The children then return to their seats for writing time. I call this folder time.... some teachers may use this time as their journal writing time. I have my children keep monthly folders(construction paper folded in half and decorated). Inside we have a calendar and weather graph that we fill in daily. After this the children engage in free or structured writing. In free writing they write whatever they wish using invented spelling and/or pictures. I try to transcribe for each student at least once a week. In structured writing I give them specific things to write: name, voc. words, number words, sentences, etc. A few children share their writing each day. At the end of each month I save a few things from their folder to keep in their portfolio to document growth and progress. The rest goes home.

The shared book experience is probably the easiest and most effective whole language technique to implement in the primary classroom. The idea is based on the research of Don Holdaway from New Zealand. I'll share more with
you about Holdaway and his research in my next writing. I have my children sit around me on a carpet area in front of the big book easel. We read quality children's literature trade books, big books, and poems and songs printed on large chart paper. This is when I teach any whole group lessons pertaining to phonics, whole language strategies, skills, etc. This is done once again using the modeling process I mentioned before within the context of reading the stories, big books, poems and songs. Are you familiar with any whole language strategies? If not, let me know and maybe we can get a discussion going on those.

Following the shared book experience, we break into reading groups and independent work time. In reading groups we read literature trade books and other whole language materials (Sunshine Series-The Wright Group) as well as any good stoies in the basal. Others in the rooom are working in various centers, publishing stories with mother volunteers, and output. Output is any literature extension activity we may be doing related to art, music, drama, etc.

Whole language philosophy is neat because it allows every child to function at his or her own level. The shared book experience gives good readers a chance to shine and act as models, while at the same time it allows reluctant or problem readers to join in when they feel ready or comfortable. Independent work time allows for more traditional reading groups where needs are addressed, but through the use of quality children's literature rather than basals.

Many children still experience trouble with letters and sounds at the first grade level. Whole language doesn't say one shouldn't teach phonics, but rather that it should be taught as one strategy for gaining meaning and that it should be taught in context. That can happen alot when the children are reading the big books and the chart poems and songs. I also use a book called Alphabet Puppets by Fearon. A cute story is related to each letter and sound, sort of like AlphaTime.

This is a start and maybe a few ideas you can try after Christmas. I have lots of handouts I've developed that I could share with you through the mail if you are interested. Mike says to put it on the network for all to see but who has time.... I will try to write more next week. Anyone else is welcome to jump in on this conversation!

APPENDIX B--PAPER 6

!!!